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THE GORGEOUS CECILE

A SKETCH IN THREE ACTS

BY

BEULAH KING

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18 Vesey Street, New York

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A Sketch in Three Acts

By

BEULAH KING

Author of "Poor Dear Uncle James," "His Sisters," etc.

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Successor to
DICK & FITZGERALD
18 Vesey Street New York

PC 3521
I.E. G. 4
1920

OCT -9 1920

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The Gorgeous Cecile

CHARACTERS

ALONZO MEREDITH.....	<i>A widower</i>
MAX MEREDITH.....	<i>His son</i>
PROTHERO JONES.....	<i>Max's friend</i>
MISS EMILY COURTNEY.....	<i>Alonzo's sister-in-law</i>
MRS. LOUISE HIGGLESWORTH.....	<i>Alonzo's sister-in-law</i>
CLAIRE THOMAS.....	<i>Miss Courtney's friend</i>
CECILE.....	<i>A maid</i>
PAULINE.....	<i>A maid</i>
WADE.....	<i>A butler</i>

TIME.—The present.

LOCALITY.—Any suburban town.

TIME OF PLAYING.—Two hours.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

ALONZO MEREDITH. A small man of about fifty-five years. His manner is continually preoccupied. Wears a business suit, and carries a soft covered volume in his pocket.

MAX MEREDITH. A handsome young man of about thirty. Wears a business suit.

PROTHERO JONES. Max's friend, a good looking young man of about thirty-four.

MRS. HIGGLESWORTH. A beautiful widow of about thirty-eight, dressed in excellent taste.

MISS COURTNEY. About forty-five. The exact opposite of Mrs. Higglesworth.

The Gorgeous Cecile

CLAIRE THOMAS. A red-haired girl of about thirty, dressed neatly and quietly.

CECILE. An unusually beautiful girl of about twenty-two, dressed in black with white frills of an up-to-date maid.

PAULINE. A plain looking girl dressed as a maid.

WADE. Wears butler's uniform.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

Soft covered book for MR. MEREDITH, also a telegram blank in secretary for MR. MEREDITH. Cigarette and matches for JONES. Tea wagon containing tea things for WADE.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R. means right hand; L., left hand; C. D., door at center; D. R., door at right. UP towards back of stage; DOWN, towards footlights.

The Gorgeous Cecile

ACT I

SCENE.—MR. MEREDITH'S study. *In the rear wall center a single door leading into the library, and L. of which are bookcases, partly filled with books. The shelves are new, having been put up that very morning, and extend the width of the walls on either side. R., single door leading into the hall. In the left wall three windows overlooking the gardens. DOWN R. corner a secretary. DOWN L. a reading table with chaise-longue beside it. A small step-ladder is before the book shelves in the upper R. corner, surrounded by piles of books. Chairs and several pictures of famous playwrights, actors and actresses, complete the furnishings. A bell cord in the lower left hand wall beside the chaise-longue. DISCOVERED, CECILE standing half way up the step-ladder, back to audience, arranging books on shelves.*

ENTER, WADE C. D., *balancing a pile of books in his arms, goes to CECILE.*

CECILE (*turning*). Oh, Mr. Wade, don't bring any more. There are too many now. Where am I going to put them all? (*During the following, she continues her work*)

WADE. His orders, Miss.

CECILE. Don't call me Miss.

WADE. I beg your pardon, M——

CECILE. There, you almost said it again. You get one idea in your head and you can't get it out.

WADE (*humbly*). But what's wrong about it?

CECILE. Oh *everything*! Can't you see, Wade, that it isn't good form. It's bourgeois and you mustn't be bourgeois. It's disgusting.

WADE. I'm sorry. (*He doesn't in the least follow her*)

CECILE. I know. You always are, but it doesn't do a bit of good for you to be sorry.

WADE. You hate me?

CECILE. No, Wade, I don't hate you. Nothing could make me *hate* you as long as you possess that divine figure.

WADE. And you're going to marry me when your year's up?

CECILE. I didn't say that. There's a lot of annoying little ways you've got to get over first.

WADE. I'll try and with you to make something of me —

CECILE. I think I prefer a ready-made husband.

WADE. But if I've possibilities —

CECILE. Oh yes, you've possibilities all right, but your brain's concrete. You are just grand in the servants' quarters. I adore to see you boss the cook and the whole lot of them.

WADE. That's it. You adore me one minute and laugh at me the next. I don't see as how you can love me very much.

CECILE. Love you! I wouldn't love anyone unless I first admired him. My husband must be not only handsome and good, but good for *something*.

WADE (*piqued*). And where do you get your fine ideas?

CECILE. From my great-grandmother who lived with the Adamses! There!

ENTER PAULINE D. R.

PAULINE (*going up to CECILE*). I've come to help you, Cecile. (*Glances at WADE timidly*)

CECILE. All right, Pauline. Pile up those soft green covered books over there and put them on the third shelf.

(*To WADE*) Pass me that red book. (*WADE stoops and gets it while PAULINE watches him intently*) Thank you. (*Taking an armful from the top shelf*) Now take these to the library and leave them on the table. (*WADE takes them and EXIT c. d.*)

PAULINE (*in an awestruck whisper*). How do you dare order him about so?

CECILE. He likes it.

PAULINE. Ain't he jest grand?

CECILE. Some figure, I'll say.

PAULINE. Do you know I think he's handsomer even than Mr. Max.

CECILE (*smiling*). I shouldn't wonder.

PAULINE. You wait until you see Mr. Max. Oh lor', he's swell!

CECILE (*facing about with sudden interest*). Mr. Max! Mr. Max! Mr. Max! that's all I've heard since I came here. Tell me about him. (*Sits on top step of ladder*)

PAULINE (*also quitting work*). Well, he's thirty—handsome, and don't like the ladies.

CECILE. That's interesting. Go on.

PAULINE. His father's trying to get him married off.

CECILE. Naturally.

PAULINE. And his Aunt Emily—that's the ugly one—invites all sorts o' girls here for bait to please his father, but Mr. Max don't bite, no sir, he don't bite. Every week last summer a new girl was invited here, but nothing doing and one of 'em was a countess.

CECILE (*her chin in her hands*). What a strange man!

PAULINE. Ain't he though! And Mr. Meredith's that crazy for him to marry. All these elegant houses and no mistress for 'em.

CECILE. Um-um.

PAULINE. For six years now he's been trying his best to make a match.

CECILE. When does this Mr. Max come home?

PAULINE. Oh lor', ain't you heard? He's due to-day, late this very afternoon.

CECILE. Really? And who's the girl for this week-end?

PAULINE. Miss Thomas, a Miss Claire Thomas, a young girl Miss Courtney met in Europe last summer. They say Miss Courtney claims this is the one for him. I ain't even seen her, but I have my doubts.

CECILE. I should think you might, after seeing the failures of six years.

PAULINE. As for my part I can't see why the father himself don't marry. He's only fifty-five, they tell me, and it's common talk about the house Miss Courtney wouldn't sniff at an opportunity of marrying him even if he is her dead sister's husband. They say she's frightfully afraid Mrs. Higglesworth will get him. (*With a chuckle*) Funny, ain't it? I suppose she's jealous of Mrs. Higglesworth. She's so swell.

CECILE. Mr. Meredith's a prune!

PAULINE. You don't like him!

CECILE. His ears are ugly.

PAULINE. Don't—don't you like a man unless he's handsome?

CECILE. No!

PAULINE. Oh lor', so the cook told me, but I wouldn't believe her.

CECILE (*rising and turning back to the shelves*). Come, let's finish this shelf anyhow. Plays, plays, plays. (*Gets down from the ladder*)

PAULINE. Mr. Meredith's nuts on plays. They call it his hobby below stairs. He wrote a play once.

CECILE (*not the least interested*). Really! (*Takes some books and EXIT C. D.*)

PAULINE (*following*). And it was given by the Euclid Club, a swell ——— [EXIT C. D.]

ENTER MRS. HIGGLESWORTH *and* MISS COURTNEY D. R.

MRS. H. My dear Emily, it's so absurd. (*Goes to chaise-longue and drapes herself upon it with care*)

MISS C. Absurd? I don't understand you, Louise. (*MISS COURTNEY takes her stand back of table*)

MRS. H. To think Max would fall in love with *her*.

MISS C. (*with asperity. She has plenty*). That's because *you* didn't invite her down. I don't know why he shouldn't fall in love with her, clever, good-tempered —

MRS. H. But don't you see, Emily, those things count so little with men.

MISS C. I suppose you are about to tell me I don't know anything about men and their tastes.

MRS. H. Precisely, Emily.

MISS C. (*sourly*). And just because you married you know everything about them.

MRS. H. (*sweetly*). Oh no, Emily, I wouldn't say that. Men are strange and Max is a puzzle, but what I *do* know is that Claire Thomas will never attract Max and inviting her here was foolishness on your part.

MISS C. (*stubbornly*). I don't see why. You never can tell who will attract whom. We've got to get him married, haven't we?

MRS. H. Oh yes, we've got to get him married.

MISS C. (*with reverence*). We promised his father and what we promised his *father* —

MRS. H. I promised his father, dearie, and *you* only seconded the motion. (MRS. HIGGLESWORTH *is aware of her sister's affection for ALONZO, takes delight in teasing*)

MISS C. (*icily*). Alonzo's so set on it. He hasn't another thought in his head.

MRS. H. (*with meaning*). Hasn't he!

MISS C. Why, what do you mean, Louise?

MRS. H. Whatever meaning you care to put upon it, Emily.

MISS C. He—he hasn't spoken of marrying again, Louise?

MRS. H. Not exactly.

MISS C. You wouldn't marry him, Louise?

MRS. H. (*roguishly*). *Never*. Would you?

MISS C. (*quickly*). Oh no, of course not.

MRS. H. He's rather nice at times. (*Vaguely*)

MISS C. To—to you, Louise?

Mrs. H. Um-um!

Miss C. When?

Mrs. H. At times, at frequent times, Emily. Isn't he nice to you?

Miss C. Oh yes, often. (*She sits. Pause*) Louise, how do you do your hair?

Mrs. H. (*indifferently*). Therese does it.

Miss C. Would you ask her to do mine sometime?

Mrs. H. Certainly. But with so few strands——

Miss C. I think you're unkind.

Mrs. H. I didn't mean to be, dearie, but there, I suppose the truth is often unkind.

Miss C. (*ignoring the remark because she wants "to get something out of" her sister*). Louise, in your experience with men, do you find the hair, that is the way it's done up—makes much difference to men?

Mrs. H. (*mischievously*). Oh, loads, Emily. I've known a man to turn down a perfectly fine girl because of the way her hair was done.

Miss C. Isn't it dreadful?

Mrs. H. Isn't it!

Miss C. Of course I don't suppose an older man, that is, a middle-aged man—is so particular.

Mrs. H. More so, my dear, more so. A well-dressed head means everything to him. Take Lonnie——

Miss C. (*aghast*). Lonnie?

Mrs. H. Yes, Alonzo.

Miss C. You call him Lonnie? (*Reproachfully*) Oh, Louise!

Mrs. H. Take Lonnie, for instance; he's terribly particular. The other night going in to dinner he took the trouble to tell me the wave in my hair was too tight.

Miss C. Mercy! he never said such a thing to me.

Mrs. H. Naturally, since you don't have a wave in your hair.

Miss C. (*who has implicit faith in her sister's knowledge of men but hates to admit it*). Do you think he would if I did, Louise?

MRS. H. (*sweetly*). Oh, I shouldn't wonder. (*Pause, while EMILY smiles to herself*) Have you seen the new maid?

MISS C. Cecile? Yes.

MRS. H. Isn't she wonderful?

MISS C. Wonderful?

MRS. H. Oh, Emily, you're so stupid. Sometimes I can't imagine you are my sister. I mean wonderful to look at, of course. Such a figure, positively divine, and the way she carries herself, ah!

MISS C. I hadn't noticed. (*Pause, while EMILY smiles again*) Louise, do you think I could have some puffs made from my hair?

MRS. H. Good heavens, Emily! Puffs aren't worn now. What you want is a wig.

MISS C. (*bitingly*). Well, you are humorous, aren't you?

MRS. H. (*with a low, pretty laugh*). Forgive me, dear..

MISS C. You might help me.

MRS. H. Help you? What for?

MISS C. Help me to look nice.

MRS. H. But, Emily, you're ——

MISS C. There, I knew you'd say it. You're hard. You always were, and why you had all the good looks is more than I can see.

MRS. H. It's not looks entirely, my dear.

MISS C. (*desperately*). Well, what is it then?

MRS. H. (*knowing her sister's impossibilities*). Oh, everything!

MISS C. Louise, you're exasperating.

MRS. H. Emily, I believe you're in love.

MISS C. (*gulping*). I—I ——

MRS. H. (*laughing prettily*). I'm not blaming you, my dear, but it's a very unwise thing to do.

MISS C. Unwise or otherwise—you were once in that state.

MRS. H. (*with sudden seriousness*). I was young and foolish then.

MISS C. Were you young two years ago when you entertained each night for a season that man —

MRS. H. I was a martyr. (EMILY *sneers openly*) And, really, Emily, I thought all the time you ought to be entertaining him, but all I could say and do he would stick to me. (*With a sigh*) It's always been that way ever since I can remember.

MISS C. I suppose he wasn't young enough. I suppose you're looking to be a young man's slave, next venture.

MRS. H. Heavens, Emily, what English!

MISS C. Well, perhaps you'll get the opportunity yet.

MRS. H. (*sighing*). Perhaps.

MISS C. And I suppose you'd take up with it.

MRS. H. I think so, if he loved me.

ENTER MR. MEREDITH, D.R. *His interest is entirely taken up by the books scattered about.*

MISS C. (*first; with feeling*). Alonzo!

MEREDITH. Yes, yes, Emily, what is it? (*Deigns to glance up*)

MISS C. (*foolishly*). How delightful the new shelves are!

MEREDITH (*irritated, as usual, at her*). Shelves?

MISS C. For your plays.

MEREDITH. Ah yes, yes.

MRS. H. (*languidly*). Lonnie.

MEREDITH. Ah, Louise. (GOES over to *chaise-longue*) I didn't expect to find you here. (*He is pleased*)

MRS. H. My dear man, you wouldn't have, but every other room in this house is being housecleaned.

MEREDITH. I had hoped you came here because of a personal interest.

MRS. H. (*starting up*). Lonnie, I'm a brute. Where is it?

MEREDITH (*drawing a soft covered book from his pocket*). Here, Louise.

MRS. H. You dear wonderful man. (*He beams*) Your new play. How could I forget? Such adorable covers! (*Rises and takes his arm.* MISS COURTNEY glares)

MEREDITH. Do you like it?

MRS. H. Like it? I should say I did. My dear man, it's the best ever. (*Leading him to secretary*) You've just got to give this copy to me and (*Handing him a pen*) with your *autograph*! (*He writes, chuckling*) Lonnie, I'm proud of you. To think we should have a real author in the family! I've had hopes, but never such ambitious ones as that. (*He hands her the book*) Thank you. I shall treasure it for always. (*Hugs it*)

MISS C. (*who has been watching them intently*). A-hem! (*Very loud*)

MRS. H. (*jumping*). Mercy, Emily, what do you want?

MISS C. (*icily*). I just wanted to let you and Alonzo know that there are other people who are proud of him too.

MEREDITH. Thank you, Emily.

MISS C. (*rising*). And that feel just as much of an interest in him if they don't gush and mash words.

MRS. H. (*with a laugh*). Oh, Emily, you are so absurd.

ENTER CLAIRE THOMAS D. R.

CLAIRE (*seeing MRS. HIGGLESWORTH*). Pardon me, I was looking for Miss Courtney.

MISS C. Right here, my dear. Come in. (*EMILY is all smiles, realizing in CLAIRE'S arrival a feather in her own cap; she GOES to meet CLAIRE and pecks her gingerly on the cheek*) You're not looking a bit tired after your journey. Did you find everything up-stairs satisfactory?

CLAIRE. Quite, thank you, Miss Courtney.

MISS C. (*turning toward MEREDITH and MRS. HIGGLESWORTH*). My sister, Mrs. Higglesworth, you have met.

MRS. H. I believe so.

CLAIRE (*with genuine admiration*). Oh, yes, I can never forget you. (MISS COURTNEY *glowers*)

MISS C. My brother-in-law, Mr. Meredith, Miss Thomas. (*They shake hands*)

MRS. H. I'm sure we are to enjoy your visit immensely. You're very clever, I hear.

CLAIRE. Oh no, you're quite wrong. I'm not clever, but people think so because I've written a play or two.

MEREDITH (*wide eyed*). You write plays? (MRS. HIGGLESWORTH *and her sister exchange glances*)

CLAIRE. Yes. Are you interested in plays?

MEREDITH (*fairly wild*). Interested in plays? Louise, she asks me if I am interested in plays?

MRS. H. My brother-in-law is something of a playwright himself.

CLAIRE. How delightful!

MEREDITH. I had one produced a short while ago by the Euclid Club and I have recently had one published by Oswald, Dean & Riche. (*Indicating volume* MRS. HIGGLESWORTH *holds*)

CLAIRE. Really! Of course you will let me read them?

MEREDITH. Charmed to.

CLAIRE. Oh, I'm so glad I came. I didn't expect really to come upon such congeniality.

MEREDITH (*pulling forward a chair*). Sit down, do. I'm sure we have a lot to talk about. (CLAIRE *sits and he draws up another chair*) Will you sit, Louise?

MRS. H. Thank you, Lonnie, but I should be such a poor third to your very interesting party that I think I'll be off.

CLAIRE (*who admires her*). I'm sure you couldn't be a poor third to any party. (*To* MISS COURTNEY) You'll stay, Miss Courtney?

MEREDITH. Emily isn't interested in plays. (*Turns directly to* CLAIRE *and begins to talk*. EMILY *shows her dissatisfaction*. LOUISE *looks at* EMILY *a moment, then laughs softly; they are back of the others*)

MISS C. I didn't know she wrote plays and you needn't look at me like that.

MRS. H. (*pleased with it all*). Oh Emily, you are too ridiculous. A wife for Max indeed! A wife for Lonnie I should say. [EXIT D. R. EMILY *flaunts after her*

MEREDITH. I suppose you have studied playwriting.

CLAIRE. Yes, here and abroad.

MEREDITH. Ah!

CLAIRE. And you?

MEREDITH. Never seriously.

CLAIRE. But you have written with success.

MEREDITH (*dolefully*). Only tragedies, and any one can write a tragedy.

CLAIRE. I don't agree with you—(*Laughing*) and at the very beginning—that's bad.

MEREDITH (*seriously*). *He is very anxious there shall be no disagreements*. I mean this way. With a tragedy the audience knows what it has come to see and does not expect anything to laugh at—any wit, any humorous situations. I'm no good at humorous situations. I can't seem to get them. And the dialogue—do you have trouble in getting a bright, snappy dialogue?

CLAIRE. Generally I do. Wit is not easy to acquire.

MEREDITH. Ah no, that's it, and unless you are born witty —

CLAIRE. But so few of us are. Don't be discouraged, Mr. Meredith.

MEREDITH. I'm not now. In fact, your coming here has given me heart and renewed hopes. We shall have so much in common, ah yes. Perhaps—I'm not presuming too much to say we might collaborate on a play some day—you and I —

CLAIRE. Oh, delightful!

MEREDITH. You—you could supply the humor.

CLAIRE. I don't know why you should think me humorous. I've shown no instance of it as yet.

MEREDITH. But writing is quite different than talking. (*Not meaning to be impolite*) Haven't you often known the cleverest comedy writers to be lugubrious

creatures in society and the greatest tragedians makers of fun? Now I'm sure you have a sense of humor and wit in writing.

CLAIRE. And why are you so sure you haven't?

MEREDITH (*confidentially*). Well, this is why. If I had a sense of humor I'd appreciate my sister-in-law, Emily, but as I haven't — (*Stops helpless*)

CLAIRE (*laughing*). You are droll.

MEREDITH. And as for wit, I never made a witty remark knowingly in my life.

CLAIRE. I don't believe you. Pardon me. (*Gets up and goes to book shelves*) What an interesting array!

MEREDITH (*following her*). Yes, I think I have nearly every play that was ever published.

CLAIRE. What a feast!

MEREDITH. It seems to me an excellent way to prepare oneself for playwriting. We might do some reading aloud from the best of them.

CLAIRE (*turning to him with enthusiasm*). Do you suppose we could put on a play here?

MEREDITH. I don't know why not, I'm sure.

CLAIRE (*clasping her hands*). Get our own cast! Coach them! Oh, I'm sure we could.

MEREDITH. And get our characters?

CLAIRE. From the household, perhaps the servants. I've known of cases where remarkable talent has been found among the servants. Why, at Lady Randolph's last year, there was a housemaid who turned out to be a wonder.

MEREDITH. You don't say!

CLAIRE. Oh, I think it would be just too splendid. I'd do the settings and help with the coaching! (*He beams. Life has never before offered him such joy*) You could be chief coach and I'd offer hints and suggestions.

ENTER MAX MEREDITH and PROTHERO JONES C. D.

MAX. Hulloo, dad! (*They shake hands*)

MEREDITH. Hulloo, hulloo!

JONES. Howdy, Mr. Meredith.

MEREDITH (*shaking hands*). This is a surprise. Glad to see you, my boy. (*Turning to CLAIRE*) I say, Miss—er—er —

CLAIRE (*smiling*). Thomas. Claire Thomas.

MEREDITH. Miss Thomas, my son, Max, and Mr. Jones. (*She offers her hand to each in turn. MAX looks annoyed*)

CLAIRE. I'm delighted to meet you.

MEREDITH (*in a reverential whisper*). Max, she writes plays.

MAX. By Jove, dad, is that so?

JONES. You don't say. Well, that is interesting.

MEREDITH. She's had three accepted and acted at the Playhouse.

CLAIRE. Oh dear, you are making me out quite a genius and I'm not one at all. (*To MAX*) I came here visiting your aunt, Miss Courtney, and I have only just arrived.

MAX. And my father cornered you. I see. Play-writing is his hobby. By the way, what's become of the rest of the family? Haven't seen a soul and we've been all over the place. (*MISS COURTNEY appears at D. R.*)

MEREDITH. Your aunts were here a moment ago.

MISS C. (*frigidly*). I'm here now.

MAX. Hulloo, Aunt Emily. (*He kisses her shyly*)

MISS C. I'm glad you've come, Max.

MAX (*with meaning*). I see you have prepared for my coming.

JONES. How de do, Miss Courtney. (*They shake hands*)

MISS C. I came in for Miss Thomas. I thought she might like to see the garden instead of sitting in this stuffy room.

MEREDITH. Of course, of course, deucedly stupid of me, deucedly stupid.

CLAIRE. Oh, you're not stupid at all, Mr. Meredith. (*MISS COURTNEY takes her arm*) You're delightful

company and I'll see you later. (MISS COURTNEY *leads her to D. R. hastily*)

[EXIT MISS COURTNEY and CLAIRE D. R.]

MEREDITH. Clever girl, the cleverest girl I ever met. Knows something and she's good looking too, one in a thousand.

MAX. Now dad, I know what you're aiming at and you needn't begin that rot. I know why she's here. Proth., old chap, got a cig? (JONES *hands him a cigarette which he lights*)

MEREDITH (*having actually forgotten why she is here*). Why, she's here, she's here—she's here——

MAX. Yes, she's here. I'm well aware of it.

MEREDITH. As a friend of your Aunt Emily's, and I'm sure——

MAX (*with a wink at JONES*). Well, you needn't be sure of anything.

MEREDITH. —that I'm glad she is.

MAX. Keep on being glad and entertain her. I won't. I've brought Proth. down here for some hunting and I'm not going to be bothered with a red-headed girl. (*He sits*)

JONES. I say, Max, you're a bear.

MAX (*to JONES*). Yes, you've got it too. I suppose you're in love with her already. It would be like you, and I shan't be able to get you beyond the grounds.

MEREDITH (*going over to MAX*). Max, listen. (*With sudden eagerness*) You shall do all the hunting you want, all you want, I say. I'll—I'll entertain Miss Thomas! [EXITS *hastily* D. R. MAX *stares after him*]

MAX. Well, can you beat it? (*Throws his head back and laughs*)

JONES. Max, don't you ever intend to look at a girl?

MAX. Cut it, Proth. Don't waste words. What love-sick story are you going to tell me now? I suppose it's a widow this time. Well, wait until you meet Aunt Louise, widow of the late Colonel Higglesworth, and all other dames will be as nothing. She's come to live with

us along with Aunt Emily. Proth., I believe you'll fall for her.

JONES. Shouldn't wonder. It wouldn't be the first widow I'd fallen for. I say, what was that red-haired girl's name?

MAX. Thomas? Wasn't it?

JONES. No, I mean her first name.

MAX. What are you going to do? Write a sonnet to her? Well, Proth., you'd better be about it. The governor's met her on common ground.

JONES. It's easy to write a sonnet to a red-haired girl.

MAX (*warningly*). Proth., remember the big game we've come after.

JONES. She did have unusual hair.

MAX. Wait until you see Aunt Louise. Hers is even more unusual. Real Titian hues. Aunt Louise was a belle, Proth. She knows all the ropes of the game.

JONES. I wonder then she hasn't trapped you into marrying some fair damsel.

MAX. Ah, Proth., I'd like to see the woman who could trap me.

JONES. So would I. By Jove, I'd give a good deal. There's that sweet little Vincent kid. I've fallen in love with her a dozen times.

MAX. Proth., you're getting to be a bore. Let's go out and have a look at the kennels. (*GOES to C. D., JONES following, just as CECILE ENTERS. Both simultaneously stop and stare*)

CECILE. I beg your pardon. I didn't know any one was here. (*She turns*)

MAX. Come in. We're going out. (*She turns back and GOES over to bookcase*)

[EXIT MAX and JONES C. D., after a long backward glance.]

ENTER PAULINE D. R.

CECILE (*turning*). I've seen him.

PAULINE. Who?

CECILE. The young lord of the house.

PAULINE. Mr. Max?

CECILE. Um-um.

PAULINE. Has he come? You don't say. Ain't he wonderful?

CECILE. Divine.

PAULINE. I knew you'd think so—I just knew it.

CECILE (*taking an armful of books from lower shelf*). I'll take these back to the library, the green ones. They are novels that got mixed in and you come along with the others. (*PAULINE piles books on her arm*)

[EXIT CECILE C. D.]

ENTER MAX D. R., GOES *close to PAULINE, stares, rubs his head thoughtfully.*

MAX. I say, have I seen you before?

PAULINE (*letting all the books fall*). Y-yes-s-s-sir.

MAX. When?

PAULINE. Many t-times, s-sir, in this very house.

MAX. Did—did I meet you just now coming in that door as I went out?

PAULINE. No s-sir, not me, sir.

MAX (*with a great sigh*). I thought not. Thank you.

[EXIT D. R., *leaving PAULINE staring after him as the curtain falls.*]

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as ACT I. TIME.—Afternoon of the next day. DISCOVERED, MAX, back to audience, leaning against the frameway of C. D. He is smoking a pipe and talking to CECILE, who is at work among the books in the library.*

MAX (*in a voice to arouse sympathy*). I didn't get so much as a rabbit. Worse luck!

CECILE (*from within, in a disinterested voice*). Didn't you?

MAX. No. (*Pause. Making a desperate effort for conversation*) Are you fond of dogs?

CECILE (*shortly*). Not very. (*Pause*)

MAX. Have you ever been out to the kennels?

CECILE. No.

MAX. Great place, the kennels. (*Whistles softly, turns, and comes into room, stopping by bookcase at R. Presently CECILE ENTERS C. D. with some books. MAX watches her place them on shelves*). More plays?

CECILE. Always more plays.

MAX. The governor has gone daft on the subject of the drama. Are you appointed guardian of the library?

CECILE. Oh dear, I hope not. I'd hate to be appointed guardian of anything. (*Starts back toward C. D.*)

MAX (*courageously for him*). I wish you wouldn't go. (*CECILE stops, her back toward him*) I think you might stay and entertain me. I think I deserve it after the day's hard luck.

CECILE. I have ten thousand books to dust.

MAX. They won't mind if you neglect them and I will most awfully if you neglect me.

CECILE. But I'm not entertaining, not the least little bit.

MAX. I'm not so sure. At any rate you can answer questions. Do you mind if I ask you a few?

CECILE (*turning to him*). No. Do you mind if I ask you a few?

MAX (*gallantly*). Not at all. Fire away.

CECILE. You may begin. You started the game.

MAX. Thank you. How long have you been here?

CECILE. One week to-day. That's a terribly uninteresting question.

MAX. I'll do better next time. Go ahead.

CECILE (*smiling*). Why don't you like girls?

MAX. Who said I didn't?

CECILE. You're not answering my question.

MAX. I can't.

CECILE. Then we won't continue the game.

MAX. Oh, yes, we will. Are you engaged?

CECILE (*with finality*). No.

MAX. And never intend to be?

CECILE. Oh, I don't know. Maybe. Why don't you get married?

MAX. Give me time.

CECILE. You're not playing fair. You don't answer *direct*. (*Starts off*) I'm going.

MAX (*taking a step toward her*). Don't go, please.

CECILE (*stopping in the doorway*). Yes.

MAX. You'd be surprised if I told you you were the only girl I ever begged to stay with me.

CECILE. You're conceited.

MAX (*playfully*). Could you blame me?

CECILE. You're hopeless.

MAX. Oh no, don't say that. Why, you don't half know me.

CECILE. I don't want to if that's what you're like. (*However, she comes back in the room*)

MAX. But I'm not really. I'm awfully nice. I know I ought not to say so, but there's no one else around to say it and I do want you to know it. Let's go on with the questions. We'll begin all over again and I'll be good. Let's see. Do you like butter?

CECILE. Immensely. — Who is your nice-looking friend?

MAX. He isn't nice looking.

CECILE. There, you see.

MAX. I beg your pardon. Prothero Jones—but he isn't nice looking.

CECILE. No remarks. They aren't in the game. Besides I think he is. Go on.

MAX. Do you think he's better looking than I am?

CECILE. No.

MAX (*solemnly*). Thank you.

CECILE. How long are you going to stay here?

MAX. Forever, I think. Are you flirting with me?

CECILE. I never flirt. Why do you follow me about?

MAX (*really puzzled*). I don't know.

CECILE. I believe you do. Your father will be very angry. He expects you to give all your attention to Miss Thomas.

MAX. I don't think so. Twice last evening he glowered at me for breaking in on their conversation. Why do you wear that frill on your head?

CECILE. It's the custom—a part of my uniform.

MAX. It covers up your hair.

CECILE. That's what it's meant to do.

MAX. Rotten custom! How do you like it here?

CECILE. Very much indeed.

MAX. Is my aunt Emily kind?

CECILE. I wouldn't say that exactly. (*Smiling*) She's—she's rather sour, isn't she?

MAX. Yes. Poor Aunt Emily. I reckon she'd like to marry the governor.

CECILE. You mustn't tell family secrets to the servants. *Very bad form.*

MAX. I believe I'd tell you anything. (*He has really lost his head*)

CECILE. Mr. Meredith!

MAX. Why won't you take what I say seriously? I am very much in earnest.

CECILE. Because you don't know *what* you're saying. You don't know *me*. You only met me yesterday.

MAX. But I never met anyone—that is, I never felt this way toward another girl in all my life—never.

CECILE. You are bored down here. The hunting is poor and —

MAX. Oh rot; I was bored lots of times on furlough in France.

CECILE. I'm sorry for you, awfully sorry, but you'll feel different about it to-morrow.

MAX. I won't, I tell you. I know myself well enough for that. I—I—why yesterday you swept me completely off my feet and it was the first time I had ever seen you. (*Humbly*) You—you've made me feel—I can't explain it. (*Walks back and forth*) I think, yes, I am sure

that yesterday I was happy—at least I thought I was, and now ——

CECILE. You'll get over it, the unhappiness, I mean.

MAX. See here. Why are you talking to me like this? You *are* engaged. There is someone else.

CECILE. That was a game of truth we played, wasn't it?

MAX. No, I don't believe it.

CECILE. I'm not engaged.

MAX. But there is someone?

CECILE. We mustn't talk like this here, and I'm neglecting my work.

[EXIT *quickly* C. D., while his back is turned

MAX (*walks back and forth in deep thought, then turns, thinking she is still there. In a voice of inspiration*). Cecile! (*Simultaneously with the cry JONES appears at C. D. and stares at MAX in amazement. Pause*)

ENTER JONES C. D.

JONES (*repeating the name, but letting his voice fall*). Cecile!

MAX. I say, old chap, I might as well confess. I've got to have this out with someone. Proth., what in the devil's in the air here?

JONES (*going up to him and peering anxiously into his face*). Yes—yes, you've got it bad. By Jove, you're all broken out—but who is she?

MAX (*breaking away from him*). Proth., she's gorgeous!

JONES (*humoring him*). Yes, yes, I know all about it. But who is she?

MAX. Why—she's, she's—that's right, who is she?

JONES. Max, what in the ——

MAX. Her name's Cecile.

JONES. So I noticed. But that's not very definite. Is she a young girl, a widow, an old maid, a matron, and where, pray, and when did you meet her? It must have been past midnight.

MAX. I met her here.

JONES. In your father's house? (*Solemnly*) Well, couldn't be better, but why has she escaped me?

MAX. She hasn't. You saw her yesterday.

JONES. *I—saw—her—yesterday?*

MAX. You did, sir, and in this very room.

JONES. A-ah, I know. By Jove, she *was* gorgeous. But ——— (*Pause, during which they regard each other fixedly*)

MAX (*stubbornly*). Well!

JONES (*with a whistle*). Do you think you are going to marry her?

MAX (*none so blind as those who will not see*). Haven't asked her yet. I'm afraid she won't have me.

JONES. I didn't mean that. I was thinking of the governor.

MAX. The governor's in a mood to accept anything so long as Miss Thomas stays.

JONES. Whew, you are optimistic.

MAX (*all humbleness*). Proth., do you think she'll take me?

JONES (*slapping him on the back*). Haven't a doubt of it, old chap. Cheer up.

MAX. Haven't you really? A doubt, I mean.

JONES. Of course not. (*Bursts out laughing*)

MAX (*irritated*). You're a nice sort of a friend for a fellow to have.

JONES. But I can't help it. (*Laughing again*) You're so damned serious.

MAX. Of course I'm serious and I want you to be.

JONES (*recalling the times MAX has jeered at him on like occasions*). You haven't always had the most wonderful patience with me.

MAX. You—you fall in love a dozen times a week. How could I have patience? When you really fall in love, Proth., oh gee, if you ever feel as wretched and as happy as I do I'll—I'll ———

JONES (*shaking his head wisely*). Yes, I know, old man. Awful, ain't it? Feel like proclaiming it to the world, don't you?

MAX. If I was sure of her —

JONES. Sure of *her*? I've no doubts there. Better be sure of the governor.

MAX. Proth., I'm intending to break the news to him to-day, before dinner to-night. I've made up my mind.

JONES. George, man, you *have* courage.

MAX. Oh, the governor's not so bad if you know how to handle him.

JONES. Yes, but you don't.

MAX. Curses, I know it.

JONES. Better let Cecile do it. That girl must have tact, to say the least. What are you going to tell him? You haven't proposed to her yet.

MAX. But you said you hadn't a doubt of her accepting.

JONES. I haven't.

MAX. I'm going to tell him I intend to marry her if she'll have me.

JONES. That's good, and if he —

MAX. I'm not asking him—mind you, I'm *telling* him.

JONES. I see! (*Pause*) And of course he'll turn you out and you'll get a job as chauffeur and live happily ever after. Max, be reasonable. If the governor turns you out, I shan't take you in. I'm a friend of the governor's. He's been mighty nice to me, and then (*With a smile*) I'm soon to meet your very charming aunt and I want to be on good terms with the family.

MAX. That's just like you, Proth. Looking out for yourself.

JONES. My dear fellow, I'm looking out for you too. You can't live without money. What are you educated for? Nothing. You have what they call a gentleman's education, much culture and travel, some science —

MAX. Oh, cut it; I can work with my hands, and by George, I'll do it.

JONES. You really intend to defy him then? (*With a groan*) Ah, Max, old boy, you have got it bad. I'd rather have light cases like mine and have 'em oftener.

MAX (*now years wiser than his friend*). You've never been in love.

JONES. Glad I haven't, if it's going to make the fool of me it has of you.

MAX. You wait until you are.

ENTER MR. MEREDITH C. D. *He goes to bookcase, not noticing anyone, and begins searching for a book.*

MAX (*taking the bull by the horns*). I say, dad, I've something important to say to you. (JONES gives vent to a low whistle)

MEREDITH (*turning about, startled*). Oh, oh, yes yes. I was looking for a copy of "The Mollusc" for Miss—er—Thomas.

MAX. Yes, yes, but I've something of importance to say to you.

MEREDITH. Can't it wait? She's—she's—that is, I wouldn't like to keep her waiting, you know.

MAX. Oh, it won't take long.

JONES (*going to c. d.*). I'll meet you in Honolulu, old chap. Good luck! [EXIT C. D.]

MEREDITH. Well? What is it?

MAX (*plunging*). Dad, I'm in love.

MEREDITH. In love? (*With sudden sympathy he clasps his son's hand*) Jove, boy, I understand and I'm glad for you. Nothing could please me more.

MAX (*a little taken back*). Wait a minute. You haven't asked who she is.

MEREDITH. Yes, yes, who is she, Max?

MAX. Cecile—parlor maid in your establishment and guardian of your plays.

MEREDITH (*staggered*). Cecile! Parlor maid! Guardian! Plays!

MAX. That's right, dad, you've got it.

MEREDITH. But! (*They regard each other in silence*)

MAX (*stiffening*). Yes?

MEREDITH. You—you—you—

MAX (*nervously. He is not really impudent*). V—
W, X, Y, Z.

MEREDITH. Eh?

MAX. I didn't say anything.

MEREDITH. It seems to me you have said a great deal. Has she consented to marry you?

MAX. I haven't asked her yet, but I intend to.

MEREDITH. Max, this cannot be. You know this cannot be. It had better end right here.

MAX. I don't see it that way. (*MISS COURTNEY appears at D. R. and MRS. HIGGLESWORTH at C. D.*)

MEREDITH. But you will in time. Come, come, I will have the girl discharged.

MAX (*vehemently*). But I tell you I love her.

MRS. H. (*with a gay little laugh*). Oh, how wonderful. He actually loves at last. (*Clasps her hands dramatically*)

MISS C. (*with only one girl in mind*). My dear nephew, I knew you would. I knew it. I knew it. (*Flutters up to MAX and attempts to kiss him*) Louise, I told you so. Oh, Alonzo, it's all my doings. (*Flutters to MEREDITH and clasps his coat lapels*) Aren't you going to say something to me?

MEREDITH. Um. So it's all your affair, is it? Well, I'll say something to you. You're a fool.

MISS C. (*falling back*). Why, Alonzo! I don't understand. Miss Thomas —

MEREDITH (*in a terrible voice; MISS COURTNEY always annoys him*). Miss Thomas!

MAX. Don't get excited, Aunt Emily. There's a misunderstanding. I'm not going to marry Miss Thomas.

MISS C. Not going to marry Miss Thomas — (*MRS. HIGGLESWORTH bursts into a ripple of laughter*)

MAX (*grimly*). In fact, I don't stand much show in that quarter.

MEREDITH. A-hem!

MRS. H. For heaven's sake, someone explain.

MEREDITH. Explain! I'll explain! He's going to marry Cecile, the parlor maid.

MRS. H. The gorgeous Cecile! (*GOES to MAX and*

offers her hand) Congratulations, my dear. (MAX *takes her hand gratefully*)

MISS C. But he mustn't, of course.

MRS. H. Mustn't? Why not? I think she's the loveliest specimen of young womanhood I ever saw.

MEREDITH (*who fears MRS. HIGGLESWORTH'S influence over all of them, especially himself*). I'll see the girl here now.

MAX (*laconically*). You can't. She's gone in town.

MEREDITH. Then I'll see her when she returns. At any rate, I've kept that young lady waiting long enough.

[EXITS *hurriedly* D. R.]

MISS C. What young lady does he mean?

MRS. H. Your young lady, Emily, my dear, the one you sent for to marry Max.

MISS C. (*starting toward c. d.*). Oh, what a dreadful state of affairs, what a dreadful state of affairs! (EXIT c. d. *and is heard from the library*) What a dreadful state of affairs!

MRS. H. Poor Aunt Emily.

MAX. Yes, she wants to marry the governor and he won't have her. (*With a great sigh*) Tough luck! He's always wanted you, Aunt Louise —

MRS. H. No, no dear.

MAX. Yes, he has, but I don't blame you for not marrying another old duffer after having put up with one once. A young man for you this time, Aunt Louise.

MRS. H. You mustn't say such things about your father, even if you are angry with him, dear.

MAX. It's a beastly business and he's no right to rule me. I'll not put up with it.

MRS. H. (*patting his cheek*). Patience, Max. A dreadful thing to ask of a lover, isn't it?

MAX. I'll not be ruled.

MRS. H. No, no, of course not. But you must use a little discretion or you'll lose everything. (*Walks away with a little sigh*) When am I to meet your friend? He's been in the house for two days and I haven't so much as caught a glimpse of him. Come, get him for me.

I feel like being amused. We'll have a cozy tea party right here, you and Prothero, is that it? and I.

MAX (*restlessly*). I can't.

MRS. H. It's the first time you ever refused me anything.

MAX. But you understand, don't you?

MRS. H. Of course, dear. Go out in the park and meditate, but send Mr. Prothero Jones to me.

ENTER JONES D. R.

JONES. I beg your pardon.

MAX. Come in, Proth. I'm feeling anything but sociable and here's a lady who wants to be entertained. Mrs. Higglesworth—Mr. Jones.

MRS. H. (*extending a gracious hand*). How do you do, Mr. Jones. I'm sure *you're* sociable.

JONES (*who is charmed with her*). I endeavor to be, madam.

MRS. H. (*to MAX, as he GOES to D. R.*). Tell Wade we want tea, Maxy dear.

MAX. I will.

[EXIT D. R.]

MRS. H. Poor boy. His first affair. (*She sits, draping herself gracefully on the chaise-longue*)

JONES (*drawing a chair up beside her*). And likely to be his last. I know him.

MRS. H. Now you aren't going to begin by being pessimistic. You've *got* to be nice. I'm used to only nice men.

JONES. I'd be a brute not to be at my best in your company.

MRS. H. Tell me, do you think Max is really in love?

JONES. I do.

MRS. H. I'm so glad, dear Max.

JONES. But has he a ghost of a chance with his father?

MRS. H. No, but Cecile has.

JONES. Ah, Cecile!

MRS. H. I see. She has captured you too.

JONES. If she has, she has been supplanted.

MRS. H. Ah, you fickle creature, and all within two days.

JONES. Aren't you the least curious to know *who* has supplanted her?

ENTER WADE D. R., *with a tea wagon.*

MRS. H. I'm never curious.

JONES. Interested then.

MRS. H. Of course, if you'd like to have me be. (*To WADE*) I'll serve, Wade. That's all. (*WADE EXITS D. R.*) It isn't Pauline, is it? (*Slyly. Begins to pour the tea*)

JONES. Pauline?

MRS. H. Cecile's accomplice.

JONES (*laughing*). I don't go to the servants' quarters for my friends. I find them up-stairs, here, at any rate.

MRS. H. That's nice of you because it isn't being done nowadays. Will you take lemon?

JONES. I will.

MRS. H. And sugar?

JONES. May I?

MRS. H. One pinch. (*Gives him a cup of tea*)

JONES. You *are* kind. Did you read about the poor fellow who was sandbagged and robbed of a pound of sugar shortly after eleven last night?

MRS. H. (*sympathetically*). Really? Well, he ought to have known better than carry it home at that hour. I think, yes, I am sure he deserved his fate.

JONES. But few of us get what we deserve.

MRS. H. (*sipping tea*). Ah, yes!

JONES. You are unhappy?

MRS. H. Why do you ask?

JONES. In the hope that you are. I have always wanted a mission in life and I can't imagine a more beautiful one than that of making you happy.

MRS. H. Let's not talk about me. Tell me about yourself.

JONES (*with sincerity*). I'd rather tell you how divinely beautiful you are.

MRS. H. (*with a sigh*). That's getting to be a bore. I've heard it now for—well, I won't say how many years.

JONES. But never spoken with such sincerity. Really, Mrs. Higglesworth, permit me to say you are the loveliest creature I ever met.

MRS. H. I don't doubt it. You're only thirty, aren't you?

JONES. At thirty it's possible for one to have seen a great many people.

MRS. H. Yes, at thirty one is *very* old.

JONES. Don't laugh at me.

MRS. H. I'm not. I'm taking you very seriously. You are charming.

JONES. You didn't appear at dinner last night.

MRS. H. No, I had a wretched headache.

JONES (*in tones of deepest sympathy*). Oh, I'm deucedly sorry.

MRS. H. I wish I'd known that last night. It would have comforted me. No one else is ever sorry for me.

JONES. Beasts!

MRS. H. Aren't they! I suppose you sat next Miss Thomas.

JONES. Yes, but we spoke very little to each other.

MRS. H. That's strange. Wasn't she attractive?

JONES. No. Let's not talk of Miss Thomas, please. (*Setting down his cup*) Let's talk of—(*He regards her earnestly*)

MRS. H. (*on her guard*). Something amusing. Your name, for instance. (*Laughs*) Prothero! A duck of a name!

JONES. You like it?

MRS. H. I adore it.

JONES. I'm glad. I can endure it now. You say it beautifully.

MRS. H. Do I?

JONES. But then you say everything in the same way.

MRS. H. Then if I say it so beautifully I suppose I may make use of it instead of the prosaic Jones.

JONES. If you will do me the honor.

MRS. H. I will, Pro-th-er-o.

JONES. I didn't know such an ugly name could sound so beautiful. (*She laughs*)

MRS. H. But really you haven't told me a thing about yourself.

JONES. I'd rather hear about you, please.

MRS. H. Oh, but that isn't nice. You must take me as I am. How am I going to get you interested in my past when it was spent, most of it, dutifully with my husband.

JONES. I don't believe it.

MRS. H. (*her eyes twinkling*). Mr. Jones!

JONES. I beg your pardon. I didn't mean—that is, oh, the deuce, your life must have been full of color.

MRS. H. No, very drab, really.

JONES. Then all the better. Your life has just begun.

MRS. H. You think so? (*Suddenly earnest*)

JONES. I know so.

ENTER MISS COURTNEY *hastily* D. R.

MISS C. (*bursting out like a cyclone*). Where is Miss Thomas? (JONES rises) She was to meet me here for an interview.

MRS. H. Interview? Heavens, Emily, you sound official. (*She rises*)

MISS C. (*sourly*). I'm sorry to disturb you.

JONES (*to* MRS. H.). Sit down, please. You aren't going?

MRS. H. I must. Emily has an interview here and you don't know Emily's interviews. (*Starts toward* C. D.)

JONES (*following*). But I will see you to-night?

MRS. H. (*her eyes on* EMILY). At dinner.

JONES. And after? Perhaps a stroll on the terrace?

MRS. H. Charmed, Pro-th-er-o. [EXIT C. D.]

MISS C. (*fussily*). I don't see where she can be.

JONES. Who?

MISS C. (*icily*). Miss Thomas, of course.

JONES. Oh, yes, yes. She hasn't been here, that is, I haven't seen her and I have been right in this room.

MISS C. You wouldn't see her.

JONES. Pardon?

MISS C. You wouldn't see her. That minx wouldn't let you.

JONES. Minx?

MISS C. Yes. My sister Louise. I suppose she has bewitched you.

JONES (*with memories already*). She's wonderful.

MISS C. There, I knew so. My dear Mr. Jones, let me tell you something. (*GOES over to him very ceremoniously and whispers*) She is thirty-eight, thirty-nine on the tenth of next month.

JONES (*amused*). What matter?

MISS C. No one is ever wonderful at that age.

JONES. I beg your pardon. She is. [EXIT C. D.]

ENTER CLAIRE THOMAS D. R.

CLAIRE. I have kept you waiting. I'm sorry.

MISS C. Yes, you have kept me waiting. Come in.

CLAIRE. Mr. Meredith is so interesting and knows such a lot.

MISS C. (*icily*). Yes, I've noticed you found him interesting. My dear Claire, I have planned this interview for the very purpose of telling you that you see far too much of Mr. Meredith.

CLAIRE (*aghast*). But—I don't understand.

MISS C. It isn't discreet, my dear. (*Takes her arm and draws her down beside her on the chaise-longue*) He is a widower and ——

CLAIRE (*defiantly*). I don't seek his company. He seeks mine.

MISS C. All the more reason why you should avoid him.

CLAIRE. I'm sorry if I've caused any disturbance. Perhaps I'd better leave at once.

MISS C. I think it advisable.

CLAIRE (*still aghast*). But what will they think, all of them?

MISS C. I will make things plain. In fact I have thought of what I shall tell them already. It is all planned. If you can get ready by to-morrow.

CLAIRE. To-morrow? I can get ready to-night.

MISS C. That's hardly necessary. To-morrow will do. You might stay in your room to-night —

CLAIRE. I didn't mean to neglect you after you were kind enough to ask me down.

MISS C. I forgive you everything, only you must go by to-morrow.

CLAIRE. I'll go to my room now.

MISS C. Yes, and I will say you have a headache.

CLAIRE (*rising*). Yes, yes, you can explain. (*Starts toward D. R.*)

ENTER MR. MEREDITH D. R.

MEREDITH. Ah, Miss Thomas, I've been looking for you everywhere. Where did you go?

CLAIRE (*her head down*). I—I—I —

MISS C. (*coming forward*). She has a severe headache, Alonzo, and is obliged to go at once to her room. Run along, dear, (*To CLAIRE*) I'll explain. (*CLAIRE, confused and hurt, EXITS D. R.*)

MEREDITH (*looking after her*). Too bad, devilish shame. Wish I could do something.

MISS C. (*taking his arm*). In fact, Alonzo, she's had rather upsetting news, and must leave to-morrow morning.

MEREDITH. You don't say. To-morrow morning! But we haven't finished our readings and we intended —

MISS C. (*with honey sweetness*). I'll finish them with you, Alonzo.

MEREDITH (*staggered*). But, Emily—you couldn't.

MISS C. Oh, yes, I could. You've never really known my true self, Lonnie. (*He regards her in amazement*) I'm to show it to you after she has gone. You never knew I loved the drama, did you, Lonnie? Well, *I do*. (*With coquettish shake of her finger*) Yes, *I do*.

[EXIT C. D., leaving MR. MEREDITH in a daze.]

ENTER CECILE D. R.

CECILE. I beg your pardon, sir, I was told you wanted to see me here.

MEREDITH (*trying to pull himself together*). Oh—er—yes. Come in. (*Goes to middle of floor and he regards her a moment in silent admiration*) So you are Cecile!

CECILE. Yes, sir, I am Cecile.

MEREDITH. Well, well. (*Plainly he is surprised*) Sit down.

CECILE. I'll stand, thank you.

MEREDITH (*nervously*). It's about my son Max.

CECILE. Yes, sir.

MEREDITH. Er—er, in fact I don't know quite how to begin. I will say I was never in such a predicament in all my life, such a situation!

CECILE (*really pitying him*). Much like a play, sir.

MEREDITH (*beaming at once*). Yes, yes, excellent situation. I see you appreciate the drama.

CECILE (*mischievously*). I do. In fact I've handled a great many plays.

MEREDITH. Ah, is that so? (*Rubs his hands with satisfaction*) In them I suppose. Well, you'd make a fine heroine.

CECILE. I've always wanted to be one, sir.

MEREDITH. Perhaps you will some day. I do a bit of playwriting myself.

CECILE (*enjoying herself*). Is that so, sir?

MEREDITH. Um-um. Now on quick consideration I'd cast you for an Isolde. Your hair, your face, your figure, but no,—not exactly either. (*Contemplates her a mo-*

ment in silence) Perhaps a composite of Isolde and Marguerite! Ah, yes, that's it. Excellent! A-hem, do you, that is, *would* you like to take part in a play?

CECILE. I've always longed to, sir.

MEREDITH. That is enough. You probably have the latent talent. Jove, I'd like to cast you.

CECILE. Beg pardon, sir.

MEREDITH (*burning with enthusiasm*). There's a play—one of Meredith's—wait! (*Runs to bookcase and adjusts his glasses for a search*) Um-um, where is it?

CECILE. Meredith? I just took it to Miss Thomas's room, sir. She asked for it.

MEREDITH. Ah, I see! She probably has seen you too and had the same inspiration. (*Regarding CECILE earnestly*) Queer! I wonder if she has. We could work it out together, Miss Thomas and I. (*To CECILE*) You are fair at learning?

CECILE. Oh, yes, sir.

MEREDITH. Jove, you are the very one for the part, the more I think of it, the more I believe it. In the third act, if I remember correctly, you have a scene with ——

ENTER MISS COURTNEY C. D.

MISS C. (*far too sweetly*). I'm so sorry to interrupt you, but I want a copy of Barrie, most awfully. (*To MEREDITH*) In fact I supposed the interview you were to have would be over by now and all things settled.

MEREDITH (*pitifully*). Yes, yes, Emily, that is so—the interview. Wait, Emily. Perhaps you had better stay.

MISS C. (*delighted to*). Of course, if I can be of any service.

MEREDITH. You can, Emily. (*In a stage whisper*) You tell her, Emily. I *can't*.

MISS C. Certainly, Alonzo, if you wish it. But haven't you said a word?

MEREDITH. Not about that, Emily, not about that. (*Shaking his head sadly*) We—we were discussing something else.

MISS C. (*turning to CECILE*). Mr. Meredith tells me he has said nothing to you about his original purpose of sending for you.

CECILE. He made some mention of his son.

MEREDITH. Yes, yes, so I did in the beginning, Emily. (*Triumphantly*) She has a good memory!

MISS C. I see, and I might as well come to the point at once. Of course you understand nothing can come of the affair.

MEREDITH. No, no, nothing at all.

MISS C. Max has lost his head for the time being and so we think it wiser for you to go at once.

MEREDITH (*distressed at that*). Wait a minute, Emily. She—she, that is, I was intending to cast her in a play. (*EMILY withers him with a glance*)

MISS C. (*turning back to CECILE*). We will of course pay you in advance. We are sorry this has happened, but nevertheless matters must stop here.

MEREDITH. But I can't see any harm in the girl staying on for a week or two.

MISS C. You mean it would be easier to get rid of Max?

MEREDITH (*floundering*). Well, well, of course —

MISS C. (*sweetly*). That seems to me rather a strange way of doing things.

MEREDITH (*appealingly*). You see, Miss Thomas and I have had the same inspiration to cast this girl in a play of Meredith's and —

MISS C. (*witheringly*). Miss Thomas and you! I think, Alonzo, you are forgetting yourself.

CECILE. I beg your pardon. May I speak a few words?

MISS C. I think it is not necessary, Cecile. The thing is —

MEREDITH. Emily, let the girl talk.

MISS C. Yes, Alonzo, but what good would that do? After all the thing is to send her off at once, the only thing.

MEREDITH (*stubbornly*). I'm not so sure of that.

MISS C. Oh, I see. You have changed since I last saw you. You are willing to have your son marry her.

MEREDITH. I didn't say I had changed, Emily. (*With some sarcasm*) If I remember correctly, you were the one who was to have changed.

MISS C. That is far from the subject, Alonzo. At present we are speaking of Max and this girl. Max is headstrong and in love—in love *very* unwisely. It looks as if there would be trouble.

CECILE. If I may speak, please ——

MISS C. (*ignoring her*). Much trouble. The only remedy for it as far as I can see is to get rid of the source of it.

CECILE. I think I ——

MISS C. You know this cannot go on, Alonzo. And why let matters drift until it is too late—until they elope, for of course that is what they intend to do, and be married at some out-of-the-way place, where we could never overtake them.

CECILE. Please ——

MISS C. It is outrageous and I ——

MEREDITH (*in a voice of thunder*). Emily, let that girl speak!

CECILE. Thank you, sir.

MISS C. Very well, but of course she will marry him. I see it all. (MEREDITH *nods to CECILE*)

CECILE (*very calmly*). I wanted to say you have no need to worry at present—that I'm not sure that I wish to marry your son. (*Pause*)

MISS C. Not wish to marry him?

MEREDITH. There!

MISS C. Well of all things!

CECILE (*to MEREDITH*). May I go?

MEREDITH. Just a word. You will stay on then?

CECILE. Yes, sir.

MEREDITH. That is all. (CECILE EXITS C. D., MEREDITH *chuckles* and MISS COURTNEY *continues to stare stupidly as the curtain falls*)

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as ACTS I and II, except for the step-ladder, which has been removed, and the books which have been arranged on the shelves. TIME, evening of the next day. DISCOVERED, WADE CROSSING the room from R. PAULINE, much excited, ENTERS C. D. and waylays him in the middle of the room.*

PAULINE (*breathlessly*). Begging your pardon, sir, is it true—about Cecile?

WADE (*with great dignity*). I take it you mean her refusing to marry Mr. Max?

PAULINE. Yes, sir.

WADE. It is true.

PAULINE. Oh lor'.

WADE. The truth is, she has found a more preferable mate.

PAULINE. You don't say she *refused* him!

WADE (*stiffly and with the same accent*). The truth is, she has found a more preferable mate.

PAULINE (*to herself*). How could she refuse him? With his face *and* his form *and* his money.

WADE. The truth is, she has found a more preferable mate.

PAULINE (*turning to him*). You mean she is thinking o' marryin' some one else?

WADE. I do.

PAULINE. Oh lor'. Has he as fine a form?

WADE. There's many as would think so.

PAULINE. Does he walk off as grandly?

WADE. There's many as would think so.

PAULINE (*with a thrill*). And has he a way o' makin' you feel like dust under his feet?

WADE. There's many as would think so.

PAULINE (*fearfully*). Who is he?

WADE. Myself, miss. (*Walks OFF stiffly D. R.*
PAULINE *gazes after him, unable to grasp the situation*)

PAULINE (*giving up*). My lor', oh, my lor'. (*With a little skip follows WADE OFF D. R.*)

ENTER MEREDITH *stealthily C. D., GOES to secretary and writes a telegram, and is just making his escape when he encounters EMILY ENTERING C. D., carrying a play. She wears her hair loosely, and is dressed in a very youthful-looking gown.*

MISS C. Oh, Lonnie, just going out? I thought we might have a cozy time in your study before the others arrived.

MEREDITH (*attempting to conceal the telegram*). So, Emily. I—I was just about —

MISS C. (*taking his arm and leading him DOWN stage*). But that can wait. (*Regarding telegram curiously*) Now don't say a piece of paper is more important than I am. If you do, I shall die.

MEREDITH (*putting it in vest pocket with a sigh, not daring to do otherwise just then*). No, no, I suppose not.

MISS C. (*holding forth the play*). See? I came to talk plays with you. I came to show you my *real* self. I said I would, you remember. (*Sits and invites him to, which he does reluctantly*) I have been reading William Archer, Lonnie, and I think he is *wonderful*! Such a man! Do you know he has inspired me to playwriting, I do believe. Lonnie, do you think I could write a play?

MEREDITH (*who can believe anything of her now*). I don't know. I shouldn't wonder.

MISS C. Oh, Lonnie, thank you. You see, I thought if you felt that way about it you could help me. I'd be a most *docile* pupil. Would you help me, Lonnie?

MEREDITH. Why—er—yes, if you really wish it, Emily.

MISS C. (*with all the coyness she can muster*). I thought we might study plays and then perhaps write one together, you and I. I have an idea all ready.

MEREDITH (*listlessly*). Yes?

MISS C. It's a love story, that is, love plays the most important part in it, but of course that only makes it the more interesting. Don't you think so?

MEREDITH (*with fervor*). I certainly do.

MISS C. There. I knew you'd agree with me. I knew you'd feel about it as I do. Shall I tell you the plot?

MEREDITH (*hand on vest pocket*). Not to-night, Emily, not to-night. Some other time, perhaps to-morrow, a few days from now, a week from now.

MISS C. But I am sure I can never make it so clear to you again.

MEREDITH. Write it down to-night and I will read it to-morrow when I ——

MISS C. Oh, it loses by writing.

MEREDITH. Then, Emily, I fear it will make a poor play. (*Indicating bell cord beside her*) Would you mind ringing for Wade? I have something to give him. I must get it off to-night.

MISS C. Now you're putting me off, Lonnie, and I won't be put off. Besides, you haven't said a word about my hair, my dress or *anything*. (*Rises and twirls about coquettishly*) Don't you like me the least little bit?

MEREDITH (*who has never liked her, but really detests her now*). You—you are so different, Emily.

MISS C. (*GOING close to him*). But don't you like me *different*?

MEREDITH. I don't know, Emily.

MISS C. (*getting bolder*). But I did it all for you.

MEREDITH (*rising*). Really, Emily, you are quite unlike yourself to-night.

MISS C. No, Lonnie, this is my real self. I warned you I should change. (*Persistently*) Aren't you the least little bit pleased with me?

MEREDITH (*starting toward bell cord*). I don't understand. Really, Emily, I must get Wade.

MISS C. (*waylaying him*). You've hurt my feelings and I came to you with best intentions to amuse you. I

thought since Miss Thomas has gone out of your life I might in a small way take her place.

MEREDITH (*blankly*). Miss Thomas gone out of my life?

MISS C. Yes! And the affair about Max settled.

MEREDITH (*rallying*). But—but it isn't settled.

MISS C. Not settled? No, I suppose not. (*Losing control of herself*) I suppose you'll be reading plays with *her* soon.

MEREDITH (*absently*). She'd make a wonderful heroine for Meredith's——

MISS C. (*walking away from him with disgust*). Oh!

MEREDITH. A wonderful heroine.

MISS C. (*coming back to try again*). But putting this affair of Max's aside, after all, things will be much the same as far as you are concerned.

MEREDITH (*sadly*). Things will never be the same for me again, Emily. (*He is thinking fervently of Miss Thomas*) A great change, a glimpse of happiness, yes, a very great change has come into my life.

MISS C. (*simpering*). So you have changed, as I have. We have *both* changed.

MEREDITH. Emily (*Solemnly*), I have changed.

MISS C. Oh, Lonnie, let me take it as a symbol that we will be closer bound to each other in the future than ever before.

MEREDITH (*not knowing what he is saying*). I hope so, Emily.

MISS C. Oh, Lonnie, I *feel* as if it would be so, and we—we would be so happy, so congenial. (*He looks up at her in amazement*) I shall study and make myself a fitting companion for you.

MEREDITH. God, Emily, you aren't proposing to me, are you?

MISS C. (*taken back*). I proposing to *you*? I thought *you* were proposing to *me*.

MEREDITH. Dear, dear, you couldn't have, Emily. There, there it was a misunderstanding, I'm sure. I—I

had reference to another, in fact a dear friend of yours, whom you were kind enough to bring here.

MISS C. (*who has long since looked upon CLAIRE as an enemy*). A friend of mine! I hate her, I hate her, I tell you I hate her! There. Now do you understand?

MEREDITH (*taking out telegram*). I'm sorry you hate her, for I've just written a telegram inviting her to come to us again.

MISS C. And you intend to send it?

MEREDITH. I do.

MISS C. Nothing on my part could make you change your mind?

MEREDITH. Nothing, Emily. (*Looks at him for a moment in silence, sees he is in earnest and becomes her old self*)

MISS C. Alonzo, I am disgusted, disgusted with you and with all of them, disgusted with every one in this disgusting house. If that girl is to come here I shall go back to Fairbanks. She is a minx, a minx of the worst variety, and I cannot endure the sight of her.

MEREDITH. Emily!

MISS C. You may be as terrible as you like. You have insulted me in your own house, but you won't get the opportunity again. I am leaving to-night, yes, Alonzo, I am leaving to-night.

MEREDITH (*quietly*). I always wondered why you stayed on here, Emily.

MISS C. Well, you'll wonder no more. Good-night!

[EXIT C. D., *flaunting out*

MEREDITH (*pulls bell cord, then walks back and forth smoothing telegram lovingly and smilingly*). ENTER WADE D. R. (*Handing telegram to WADE*) See that this is sent to-night, right away.

WADE. Yes, sir. (*Starts toward D. R.*)

MEREDITH. Wade. (*WADE turns back*)

WADE. Yes, sir.

MEREDITH. Miss Courtney is leaving us to-night for good. She is to make her home elsewhere. Hereafter you are to receive all orders from me until further notice.

WADE. Yes, sir. (WADE *starts to go, hesitates, coughs and takes a step toward* MR. MEREDITH) I'm leaving in a month, sir.

MEREDITH. What! Nonsense!

WADE. I'm leaving in a month, sir.

MEREDITH. But what's this for? Aren't you getting enough money?

WADE. It isn't that, sir. I'm leaving, sir.

MEREDITH. Can't hear of it, Wade. We'll have to patch things up for you.

WADE. I'm leaving, sir.

MEREDITH. In heaven's name don't say that again. You get a bone idea in your head and you can't get it out.

WADE (*off guard*). That's what she says.

MEREDITH. She? So that's the trouble, is it? Who's she?

WADE. Cecile, sir, the parlor maid.

MEREDITH (*staggered*). Cecile! Parlor maid? You're not going to marry her?

WADE (*proudly*). If she'll have me, sir, which I think most likely.

MEREDITH. And take her away from here?

WADE. Yes, sir, I've a bit of land ——

MEREDITH. Wade, you cannot. You must not. I—that is—that girl ——

WADE. I don't understand, sir.

MEREDITH. That's all, Wade. (*Excitedly*) We'll discuss your leaving later. Send my son here!

WADE. Very well, sir. [EXIT D. R.]

MEREDITH. If only until Claire comes! (*Paces back and forth*)

ENTER MAX D. R.

MAX. You sent for me?

MEREDITH. Ah! Max! (*Goes up to him*) I sent for you to say, sir, that I've changed my mind, sir, about what I said to you, sir—regarding that girl.

MAX. It doesn't matter one way or another. About your changing your mind, I mean.

MEREDITH (*not to be squelched*). I've seen her.

MAX. Um-um.

MEREDITH. She's gorgeous!

MAX. A fact I've been aware of for some time now.

MEREDITH. You knew I'd had an—er interview with her.

MAX. I've heard nothing.

MEREDITH. Well, I did. And she, well, boy, I don't blame you for feeling the way you do about her.

MAX. Thanks for the sympathy.

MEREDITH. She's given me the inspiration of my life just to look at her.

MAX (*smiling*). Have you told her of your change of mind?

MEREDITH. No; that is, not exactly, but I think she realized—that I—er ——

MAX. Had one. I see.

MEREDITH. She promised to stay on at any rate.

MAX. Kind of her, deucedly, after what you said to her.

MEREDITH. Look here, I don't like your manner. (*Wisely*) Maybe if you'd show a kinder regard for your old dad he would help you a bit.

MAX (*showing interest*). What do you mean? What did she say to you?

MEREDITH (*chuckling*). That she wasn't sure she wanted to marry you.

MAX. That's helpful, I'll say.

MEREDITH. Now, now, don't get hot-tempered. Hold your horses, because I know what's the trouble.

MAX. Yes?

MEREDITH. Wade is hounding her life out to get her to marry him. Boy, he told me right here in this very room not ten minutes ago that he intended to leave with her in a month. (MAX *makes an impatient move*) Hold on! And I say if you permit him to, you're an ass.

MAX. How can I help it?

MEREDITH (*contemptuously*). How can you help it? What a question! You haven't the spirit of your old man even now.

MAX. You!

MEREDITH. Yes! Ask your Aunt Emily about your father's spirit, boy!

MAX. But if she doesn't love me.

MEREDITH. Rot, she does. Go to her and see that she doesn't leave this house.

MAX. It seems to me, dad, you're terribly anxious to keep her here. Is it just for my interest you're talking?

MEREDITH (*with a twinkle*). Everything's for your interest. I've decided she's the one for you and—for us!
[EXIT C. D., *chuckling*]

ENTER JONES and MRS. HIGGLESWORTH D. R.

MRS. H. A divine stroll, Prothero. I don't know when I've enjoyed the terrace so much.

JONES (*completely gone by now*). Was it just the terrace then?

MRS. H. (*spying MAX*). Hulloo, here's Max.

JONES (*under his breath*). The devil! (*Aloud*) Hulloo, Max!

MAX (*with a grim smile*). I heard you!

JONES. I meant for you to hear me.

MAX. Well, you needn't devil me, old boy. I'm off. (*Starts toward C. D.*)

JONES. I wasn't meaning you, old chap. I was just surprised, don't you know, to find anyone here.

MAX (*imitating JONES' voice of a few moments before*). Was it just surprise then?

JONES. Well, I'll admit I came here for seclusion but this seems to have become the most popular room in the house.

MAX. It's become the most famous. The governor found his senses in this room not ten minutes ago, having lost them the day I was born.
[EXIT D. R.]

MRS. H. (*sitting*). Dear Max! What an adorable boy he is. He deserves to be happy.

JONES (*sitting on the foot of chaise-longue*). You wouldn't say as much for me.

MRS. H. (*touching his arm lightly*). You poor boy, of course I would.

JONES. But it's in your power to make me happy.

MRS. H. (*a little wistfully*). I wish I could think that, Prothero.

JONES. Isn't my word enough?

MRS. H. You think that way now, but after a few years —

JONES (*with vehemence*). I shall always think so. I adore you. Won't you believe me?

MRS. H. I do believe you.

JONES. Then marry me.

MRS. H. I have hoped, even prayed, for this opportunity and now it has come I—I am afraid.

JONES. Needlessly afraid.

MRS. H. Perhaps I have waited too long. Perhaps it is too late.

JONES. Too late? It would never be too late for you. You are wonderful!

MRS. H. Aren't you seeing me with infatuated eyes?

JONES. I never saw more clearly in my life.

MRS. H. Oh, Prothero, can it be true? I've waited so long for just this—my chance to happiness.

JONES. Dearest!

MRS. H. You think I have been happy because I have been gay, but I haven't been really happy, ever.

JONES. But you will be now. Oh, you will be now, say you will. (*Puts an arm about her and she does not withdraw*)

MRS. H. Dear Proth. (MISS COURTNEY *appears* c. d., *unseen by them, raises her hands in horror, groans, and* GOES OFF. *She holds a telegram in her hands*)

JONES. We will go to Groton for our honeymoon. (*Earnestly*) You will be married soon? Groton is wonderful now.

MRS. H. (*drawing away and getting up*). Now isn't that just like a man to think I could get ready soon.

JONES. But why delay things?

MRS. H. Of course, the impetuosity of youth. But really, Proth., I've got to run over to Paris and get some clothes.

JONES. To Paris?

MRS. H. Of course.

JONES (*weakly*). But how long will that take?

MRS. H. Oh, a month or two, dearie.

JONES (*like a disappointed boy*). I thought we could be married this month and go straight to Groton. Groton is wonderful now, but if you go to Paris that will mean weeks and then —

MRS. H. You poor boy, I see it all. You mean there is only one September a year at Groton —

JONES. Exactly.

MRS. H. (*with a smile*). Well —

JONES (*hanging on her words*). Well —

MRS. H. Then I—think—we'll—go to Groton.

JONES. Thank you. (*Kisses her*)

MRS. H. Come, let's break the news to the household. We must as soon as possible to make our engagement of decent length. Every minute counts. (*GOES toward D. R.*) Here's Max. You can tell him and I'll tell the others. [EXIT D. R.]

JONES (*calling*). Max, got a minute to spare?

ENTER MAX D. R.

MAX. So I'm welcome now, am I?

JONES. Max, she's accepted me.

MAX. Jove, I didn't think you could do it, old chap. She's had a hundred suitors. Congratulations. (*They shake hands*) Feeling pretty good, what?

JONES. Do you blame me?

MAX. No. Only you might show a little consideration for my feelings.

JONES. I'm sorry, Max. No luck?

MAX (*shakes head dubiously*). I haven't asked her.

JONES. Haven't asked her! Well then, how do you know you've no luck? (*With a slap*) Cheer up, old man!

MAX. She's down-stairs. (*Pause*) In the servants' hall.

JONES. Well?

MAX. With that cad.

JONES. Have you tried to get her up?

MAX. No.

JONES. Good heavens, man! Get busy. You don't think things are coming your way without an effort?

MAX. I've had a deuce of a time from the start.

JONES. Pooh, you're faint hearted. Send for her to-night and have it out. Do you suppose a girl thinks you care for her when you leave her as you have to another man?

MAX. She has just gone down. I saw her when she went.

JONES. Well, why didn't you stop her?

MAX. I—I—damn it, Proth., I wish I had your way with the women.

JONES. Only a couple of days ago you were laughing at me.

MAX. Don't rub things in.

JONES. Well, I'm sorry for you, old man, but you've got to buck up. (*Pause, while JONES whistles happily and MAX stares gloomily. In a voice of ecstasy*) Max, do you know Louise has the most glorious eyes. Full of little lights and color, changing colors like a diamond.

MAX (*not heeding*). Is that so? (*Continues to stare at his pipe stem gloomily*) But what I don't see is—why doesn't Cecile say something? She knows——

JONES (*not heeding MAX*). And her lashes; why, Max, like a silken fringe.

MAX. I've never noticed a woman's lashes until —— (*Catching the enthusiasm*) Gee, Proth., but Cecile's a wonder!

JONES (*still thinking of his LOUISE*). Even the shape of her eye and the arch of her brows.

MAX (*meaning his CECILE*). She's unusual, and you've got to admit it.

JONES. And her hair. I thought, by Jove, I'd seen handsome hair on a woman's head, but hers—divine!

MAX. The best part of it is she doesn't know she's lovely.

JONES. Did you ever notice the fragrance of her lips when you've kissed her?

MAX. Kissed her! You —— (*Glaring*)

JONES (*taken back*). Eh, what? Of course I've kissed her.

MAX. You cad!

JONES (*getting hot*). Who's got a better right, I'd like to know. (*They glare at each other defiantly*)

MAX. Look here, Proth., you've had love affairs and I've never interfered, but this is too much!

JONES. But, man, she's consented to marry me, and why shouldn't I kiss her?

MAX (*the light dawning on him*). I say! (*Foolishly*) Forgive me, old chap—a little misunderstanding, that's all. I thought all the time you were referring to Cecile.

JONES. Cecile?

MAX. Yes.

JONES. And I—I was wondering for what infernal reason I shouldn't kiss the woman I was about to marry.

ENTER MISS COURTNEY C. D., *with telegram*.

MISS C. (*spitefully*). At last I've found two people whom I dare interrupt. I never knew such a house. What has got into everyone? I thought at least your Aunt Louise was old enough to know better.

MAX. I say, Aunt Emily, be decent.

MISS C. I'm all upset. I have received this telegram brought me by Wade about a half hour ago. It says (*Reading*) "Yes. Yes. Love. Signed C." I can't make out what it can mean and why I should receive it. (*Hands telegram to MAX, who examines it*)

MAX. Are you sure it's for you?

MISS C. (*stiffly*). It was handed me by Wade. I suppose he knows what he's about.

JONES (*with a wink*). Wade is hardly responsible for what he does just now.

MISS C. Oh, in love too, I suppose.

MAX. That's funny. Have you got the envelope?

MISS C. I tore the envelope and threw it in the waste paper basket.

MAX (*reading slowly*). "Yes. Yes. Love!"

JONES. Sounds good. Someone's missing a lot.

MISS C. I'm sure it isn't for me.

MAX. But who is C? (*They all meditate deeply. In the midst of their meditations MR. MEREDITH ENTERS D. R., absent mindedly, as usual. He sees EMILY and tries to escape, but MAX will not let him*) I say, Dad, know anything about this? (*Waves telegram*) Aunt Emily has just received a telegram signed C. and written—"Yes. Yes. Love."

MEREDITH (*rapturously, his face fairly beaming*). Yes! Yes! Love!

MAX. Um-um.

MEREDITH. "Yes. Yes! Love!" A-ah.

JONES. He knows. I thought it must fit someone.

MISS C. (*witheringly*). I might have known. (*Gives MR. MEREDITH a contemptuous glance*) I might have known. Stuff and nonsense and at his age. "Yes. Yes. Love," indeed. (*Looks upon them all pityingly*) Well, I'm done with the lot of you. You are a bunch of irresponsible babies who can't keep your own hearts in order.

[EXIT D. R.]

MEREDITH (*still in a trance*). "Yes, yes. Love." Why, boy, *she's accepted me*. I wrote and asked her to come here and asked her to marry me and she writes, "Yes. Yes. Love."

MAX. Mighty fine of her, dad. I'm glad.

MEREDITH. Come, cheer up. What's the matter?

MAX. I'm wondering how many more acceptances I'll have to hear of before I die.

JONES. Come, Max, buck up. I'll send Cecile here

and, well, you'll have something to tell us in a few minutes.

MAX (*smiling in spite of himself*). You're always so damned optimistic, Proth.

JONES (*beaming*). It pays. Look what it's got me.

MEREDITH (*timidly*). I thought, a-hem, Claire and I could cast Cecile in that play we're—I say, boy, you mustn't let her go off with that fellow. You've got to marry her if only to keep her here for our play.

MAX (*grimly*). I see.

JONES (*taking Mr. MEREDITH by the arm*). Come on, Mr. Meredith. I'm going to send for Cecile and we'll be *de trop* in a minute. (*To MAX*) Remember, old man, you weren't afraid of the Huns, now don't let a woman frighten you. Keep your mind on your *croix de guerre*. (JONES *leads Mr. MEREDITH to C. D. and both EXIT. MAX paces floor impatiently, lights a cigarette, handles books on the table nervously, whistles faintly and is just about to escape when CECILE ENTERS D. R.*)

CECILE. Mr. Jones said I was wanted here.

MAX. You are. I want to talk to you.

CECILE. Yes.

MAX. I'm sorry for all that's happened. It must have been humiliating for you. I know what my Aunt Emily is.

CECILE (*quietly*). They do not want me to marry you, naturally. That is to be expected.

MAX. And naturally it doesn't matter whether they do or not.

CECILE. Doesn't it?

MAX. No!

CECILE. I thought ——

MAX. How could you think any differently? (*GOES toward her*) Cecile, I love you very much.

CECILE (*dropping her eyes*). I love you too. At first I didn't know. I was so bewildered and afraid. It—it was unusual—your loving me.

MAX. Unusual? I couldn't blame anyone for loving you.

CECILE. I thought all the time I must be dreaming.

MAX. It has been a most real dream to me and parts of it a nightmare. Cecile, you are not in love with Wade?

CECILE (*smiling*). Now you're jealous.

MAX. I am.

CECILE. Of Wade?

MAX. Of Wade.

CECILE. How could you be? (*Smiling archly*) It's too bad you haven't some of his conceit. He's very conceited.

MAX. He wanted to marry you.

CECILE (*with a little sigh*). So have a great many more.

MAX (*laughs, in spite of himself*). Who's conceited now?

CECILE. That's not conceit.

MAX. But you're not going to class me with those others who have?

CECILE. No, Max, I can't truthfully.

MAX. And you'll marry me?

CECILE. Are you quite sure you want me?

MAX. Absolutely!

CECILE. And that you just couldn't live without me?

MAX. Not for a day!

CECILE. And you'll make a model husband?

MAX (*whimsically*). How could you ask?

CECILE. And only kiss me when I ask for it?

MAX (*reluctantly*). Y-yes.

CECILE. Then I *think* I'll marry you.

MAX (*taking her in his arms*). I should *think* you might!

CURTAIN

FEMALE CHARACTERS

THE CONSPIRATORS

PRICE 25 CENTS

Comedy in 2 acts, by E. Simms. 12 females. 1 interior. Time, 40 minutes. Clever comedy showing how the Senior Class got the better of Miss Primleigh. Sparkling throughout.

CRANFORD DAMES

PRICE 15 CENTS

Play in 1 act, by A. Byington. 8 or 12 females. 2 interiors. Time, 1½ hours. Costumes of 60 years ago. An adaptation of Mrs. Gaskell's well known "Cranford."

A DAY AND A NIGHT

PRICE 25 CENTS

Comedy in 2 acts, by A. C. Ruggeri. 10 females. Time, 1 hour. Scene, room in Dorothy's ideal boarding house. Boarders, a suffragist, a demonstrator, an actress, a singer, etc. Jennie the waitress, and Mammy the colored cook have strong comedy rôles.

EVERY SENIOR

PRICE 25 CENTS

High school morality play in 1 act, by P. Hogrefe. 8 females. 1 interior. Time, 40 minutes. Costumes easily arranged. The demands made upon Miss Senior, about to graduate, seem to her very severe, but when explained by Miss Loyalty and Miss Love that they are to benefit her when going forth into the world, she appreciates what they mean. Recommended for girls' high schools.

GERTRUDE MASON, M. D.

PRICE 25 CENTS

Farce in 1 act, by L. M. C. Armstrong. 7 females. 1 interior. Time, 1½ hours. An exceedingly bright piece in which Dr. Gertrude, already the victim of circumstances, is the victim of a practical joke.

MAIDENS ALL FORLORN

PRICE 25 CENTS

Comedy in 3 acts, by E. Simms. 6 females. 1 interior. Time, 1 hour. Three girls in a manforsaken resort invite Teddy to visit them; he refuses, but writes that his friend, Dr. Denby, will replace him. They all make great preparation to welcome him. The doctor arrives—a woman.

MARY ANN

PRICE 15 CENTS

Comedy in 1 act, by H. B. Hornbeek. 5 females. 1 interior. Time, ½ hour. Domestic sketch in Yankee dialect, the leading rôle being played by Mary Ann, maid of all work.

PEGGY'S PREDICAMENT

PRICE 25 CENTS

Farce in 1 act, by E. M. Crane. 5 females. 1 interior. Time, ½ hour. Peggy's troubles arise because, just as her mother-in-law is to lunch with her for the first time, the cook leaves. Peggy's friends solve the problem—but how? Every part is excellent.

RAINBOW KIMONA

PRICE 25 CENTS

Comedy in 2 acts, by E. M. Crane. 9 females. 1 interior. Time, 1½ hours. This is a club of a senior class, each member wearing a kimona representing one of the colors of the rainbow. A burlesque on one of the Shakespearean plays is introduced.

ROSEMARY

PRICE 25 CENTS

Play in 4 acts, by A. C. Cutting. 14 females. 1 interior. Time, 1½ hours. The cast includes two Southern girls, a prim Bostonian, a darky Mammy and a pert Irish maid. Particularly adapted for girls' high schools and especially recommended.

TOM'S ARRIVAL

PRICE 15 CENTS

Play in 1 act. 3 females. 1 interior. Time, ½ hour. Three maiden ladies learn by wire Tom is to arrive. Each makes arrangements for his comfort. When Tom arrives a most unexpected climax develops.

RURAL PLAYS

HELD FOR POSTAGE

A rural farce comedy in 2 acts, by Robert Henry Diehl. 4 male, 3 female characters. 1 interior scene, very simple. Time, 1½ hours. Uncle Oliver, leading old man, and his wife are of the "Old Homestead" type of Yankee farmers. Jerusha the town gossip, the town constable and the selectman, contribute the many humorous episodes. The juvenile leads, male and female, are both very effective.

PRICE 25 CENTS

ROSEBROOK FARM

A rural comedy in 3 acts, by Arolyn Caverly Cutting. 6 male, 9 female characters. 1 interior and 1 exterior scene. Time, 1½ hours. Costumes of to-day. Old man, Yankee farmer and three good character parts for the men. A negro maid, some spinsters and an excellent soubrette part for the ladies. Easily staged. A very superior play for amateurs.

PRICE 25 CENTS

THE WAYFARERS

A rural play in 4 acts, by Katharine Kavanaugh. 6 male, 4 female characters. 2 interior, 1 exterior scene, all simple. Time, 2½ hours. Many years before the play opens, Uncle Billy disowns a beloved daughter, she having married against his wishes. Later on he repents of his harshness and makes vain efforts to locate her and her child. How the child eventually returns to her mother's house and what she previously encountered is graphically told by Clytie and Watson. Every rôle is a good one.

PRICE 25 CENTS

WHERE THE LANE TURNED

A rural comedy drama in 4 acts, by Florence A. Cowles. 7 male, 5 female characters. 2 easy interior scenes. Time, 2 hours. This rural play follows entirely novel lines in plot and construction, and as the stage settings are both simple, can be produced in any hall. Among the characters are a pert French maid, a blasé Englishman, an up-to-date chauffeur, and an uncommonly excellent juvenile lead.

PRICE 25 CENTS

WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE

A rural society comedy in 3 acts, by Eleanor Maud Crane. 4 male, 4 female characters. 2 interior, 1 exterior scene. Time, 2 hours. Modern costumes. Mrs. Briscoe, a rich New Yorker, with her two sons and daughter visit Jim Horton's farm. His niece, Eleanor, is an heiress. Paul Briscoe, ruinously in debt, resolves to win Eleanor and her money; he mistakes the Irish maid, Norah, for her mistress, but soon learns his error. Eleanor visits the Briscoes at Newport. Paul by strategy wins her consent. Mrs. Briscoe hears of Jim's sudden wealth and forces herself on him. Later, Jim's wealth proves to be not his, but Peter Adams's, his country neighbor. Things become badly mixed, but by the artless blunders of Norah are finally and satisfactorily settled.

PRICE 25 CENTS

FROM PUNKIN RIDGE

A domestic drama in 1 act, by H. Elliot McBride. 6 male, 3 female characters. 1 interior, 1 exterior scene. Time, 1 hour. Introduces a vain old lady, an adventurer, an Irishman and a Yankee, with their dialects.

PRICE 15 CENTS

PLAYS WE RECOMMEND

Fifteen Cents Each (Postage, 1 Cent Extra)

Unless Otherwise Mentioned

		Acts	Males	Females	Time
Arabian Nights	Farce	3	4	5	2¼h
Bundle of Matches (27c.)	Comedy	2	1	7	1½h
Crawford's Claim (27c.)	Drama	3	9	3	2¼h
Her Ladyship's Niece (27c.)	Comedy	4	4	4	1½h
Just for Fun (27c.)	"	3	2	4	2h
Men, Maids, Matchmakers	" (27c.)	3	4	4	2h
Our Boys	"	3	6	4	2h
Puzzled Detective	Farce	3	5	3	1h
Three Hats	"	3	5	4	2h
Timothy Delano's Courtship	Comedy	2	2	3	1h
Up-to-Date Anne	"	2	2	3	1h
White Shawl (27c.)	Farce	2	3	3	1½h
Fleeing Flyer	"	1	4	3	1¼h
From Punkin' Ridge	Drama	1	6	3	1¼h
Handy Solomon	Farce	1	2	2	20m
Hoosier School	"	1	5	5	30m
Kiss in the Dark	"	1	2	3	45m
Larry	"	1	4	4	45m
Love Birds' Matrimonial Agency	"	1	3	4	30m
Married Lovers	Comedy	1	2	4	45m
Ma's New Boarders (27c.)	Farce	1	4	4	30m
Mrs. Forester's Crusade	"	1	1	2	30m
New Pastor	Sketch	1	2	2	30m
Relations	Farce	1	3	1	20m
Standing Room Only	Comedy	1	3	1	35m
Stormy Night	"	1	3	1	40m
Surprises (27c.)	Farce	1	2	3	30m
Tangles (27c.)	"	1	4	2	30m
Little Rogue Next Door	"	1	2	3	40m
Till Three P. M.	"	1	2	1	20m
Train to Mauro	"	1	2	1	15m
When Women Rule	"	1	2	4	15m
Won by a Kodak	Comedy	1	2	3	50m
April Fools	Farce	1	3	0	30m
Fun in a Schoolroom	"	1	4	0	40m
Little Red Mare	"	1	3	0	35m
Manager's Trials	"	1	9	0	45m
Medica	"	1	7	0	35m
Mischievous Bob	Comedy	1	6	0	40m
Cheerful Companion	Dialogue	1	0	2	25m
Dolly's Double	"	1	1	1	20m
Drifted Apart	"	1	1	1	30m
Gentle Touch	"	1	1	1	30m
John's Emmy	"	1	1	1	20m
Point of View	"	1	1	1	20m
Professor's Truant Glove	"	1	1	1	20m
Belles of Blackville	Minstrel	1	0	any no.	2h
Sweet Family (27c.)	Entertainment	1	0	8	1h
Conspirators (27c.)	Comedy	2	0	12	40m
A Day and a Night (27c.)	"	2	0	10	1h
Gertrude Mason, M.D. (27c.)	Farce	1	0	7	30m
In Other People's Shoes	Comedy	1	0	8	50m
Maidens All Forlorn (27c.)	"	3	0	6	1¼h
Mary Ann	"	1	0	5	30m
Romance of Phyllis (27c.)	"	3	0	4	1¼h
Fuss vs. Feathers	Mock Trial	1	4	4	30m
Tanglefoot vs. Peruna	"	1	7	18	1½h
Great Libel Case	"	1	21	0	2h



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PLAYS WE RE

For Schools and
Twenty-five cents (Post:

		Acts	Males	Females	Time
Irish Eden	Comedy	3	8	6	2h
Kidnapped Freshman	Farce	3	12	4	2¼h
Matrimonial Tiff	Farce	1	2	1	1h
Little Savage	Comedy	3	4	4	2h
Lodgers Taken In	"	3	6	4	2½h
Miss Mosher of Colorado	"	4	5	3	2h
Miss Neptune	"	2	3	8	1¼h
My Uncle from India	"	4	13	4	2½h
Never Again	Farce	3	7	5	2h
New England Folks	Drama	3	8	4	2¼h
Next Door	Comedy	3	5	4	2h
Oak Farm	Comedy	3	7	4	2½h
Riddles	"	3	3	3	1¼h
Rosebrook Farm	"	3	6	9	1¾h
Stubborn Motor Car	"	3	7	4	2½h
Too Many Husbands	Farce	2	8	4	2h
When a Man's Single	Comedy	3	4	4	2h
Where the Lane Turned	"	4	7	5	2h
After the Honeymoon	Farce	1	2	3	50m
Biscuits and Bills	Comedy	1	3	1	1¼h
Chance at Midnight	Drama	1	2	1	25m
Conquest of Helen	Comedy	1	3	2	1h
The Coward	Drama	1	5	2	30m
Sheriff of Tuckahoe	Western Sk.	1	3	1	1h
Bashful Mr. Bobbs	Comedy	3	4	7	2½h
Whose Widow	"	1	5	4	50m
Alice's Blighted Profes- sion	Sketch	1	0	8	50m
Regular Girls	Entertainment	1	0	any no.	1h
100% American	Comedy	1	0	15	1½h
Parlor Patriots	"	1	0	12	1h
Fads and Fancies	Sketch	1	0	17	1h
Mr. Loring's Aunts	Comedy	3	0	13	1¼h
My Son Arthur	"	1	2	8	¾h
Sewing Circle Meets	Entertainment	1	0	10	1¼h
Every Senior	Morality play	1	0	8	40m
Bride and Groom	Farce	3	5	5	2¼h
Last Chance	Comedy	2	2	12	1½h
Bubbles	"	3	4	3	1½h
Hurricane Wooing	"	3	4	3	1½h
Peggy's Predicament	"	1	0	5	½h
Found in a Closet	"	1	1	3	20m
Slacker (?) for the Cause	Sketch	1	3	1	20m
Baby Scott	Farce	3	5	4	2¼h
Billy's Bungalow	Comedy	3	5	4	2h
College Chums	"	3	9	3	2h
Delegates from Denver	Farce	2	3	10	¾h
Football Romance	Comedy	4	9	4	2½h
Held for Postage	Farce	2	4	3	1¼h
In the Absence of Susan	"	3	4	6	1½h
Transaction in Stocks	Comedy	1	4	1	45m
Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party	Entertainment	1	5	11	2h
Bachelor Maids' Reunion	"	1	2	any no.	1½h
In the Ferry House	"	1	15	11	1½h
Rustic Minstrel Show	"	1	any no.	any no.	1½h
Ye Village Skewl of Long Ago	"	2	any no.	any no.	2h
Rainbow Kimona	"	2	0	9	1½h
Rosemary	Comedy	4	0	14	1½h
Pharaoh's Knob	"	1	1	12	1h